Montessori's Perspective on Citizenship Education: A View from the Netherlands

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to synthesize Montessori's writings on citizenship education to support the implementation of a Montessorian view. This synthesis demonstrates that Montessori was of the explicit conviction that a better world can be achieved through citizenship education, as it strives for a peaceful and harmonious society. We approach this topic through the Dutch context. Although schools in the Netherlands are required by law to promote active citizenship and social cohesion, this law does not stipulate which of the many different views on citizenship education schools must adhere to. Schools have the liberty to devise their own citizenship curricula if they can substantiate their views and choices. For Montessori schools, this requires insight into Montessori's view on citizenship education. Although Montessori's views are still largely appropriate in our time, an ongoing dialogue about citizenship education is required, as Montessori lived and worked in a specific geopolitical context. Based on our analysis, we have identified seven themes that characterize Montessori's view on citizenship education: one common citizenship goal; preparation for independent thinking and action; image of the future citizen; adapted and critical citizens; humanity for harmony; knowledge as prerequisite, personality development as goal; and an ever-expanding worldview. The results of this study provide valuable insights for designing and teaching citizenship education through a Montessorian lens.

Citizenship education is a hot topic in the Netherlands (e.g., De Groot et al., 2022). While the recently passed Dutch Citizenship Education Act provides some direction, schools are largely left to explicate their views on citizenship education and implement practices accordingly. Dutch Montessori schools naturally want to base their practice on Montessori's ideas, but Montessori schools' and teachers' views on citizenship education may differ from her original vision. This is especially likely to be the case in the Netherlands where the Montessori Method has been understood, developed, and implemented liberally from its inception in 1914 (de Brouwer et al., 2023). Since the twentieth century, schools have added elements to Montessori education and have put an emphasis on certain aspects in response to developments in education and in society. Despite the flexible ways in which Montessori principles are being implemented, all schools affiliated with the Dutch Montessori Association adhere to the Montessori philosophy.

The aim of this study is to synthesize Montessori's writings on citizenship education to support the implementation of a Montessorian view, which will support Dutch Montessori schools in fulfilling their legal obligation and pedagogical ambitions regarding the implementation of citizenship education. Although there has been some writing on Montessori's work in light of citizenship education, these works are mostly essays, published in non-peer reviewed journals (e.g., Hacker, 2015; Leonard, 2015). Only four of her works have been systematically reviewed with a focus on citizenship education through a literature-based, qualitative content analysis related to global citizenship and sustainability in Lower and Upper Elementary and in middle school. In this review, Gynther and Ahlquist (2022) focused on how to promote citizenship competencies and sustainability within Montessori education rather than on Montessori's original intent. Deeper insight into Montessori's views can help inform educational practices as schools formulate a Montessorian view on citizenship education.

In what follows, we briefly describe the importance and history of citizenship education with a specific focus on the Netherlands. Our argument that views on citizenship education diverge quite substantially supports the motivation for and context of our study. Summarizing these differing views allows us to consider Montessori's perspective within the range of possible ideas about citizenship education. We then provide a brief description of Montessori's life, with special attention to the geohistorical context of her time in relation to her ideas about citizenship education.

Citizenship Education

Convictions on the objectives of citizenship education have widely differed since ancient times. For example, while the education system in Sparta trained males to become loyal citizens through discipline and military skills, the Greek and Roman elites, along with military training, were taught math, reading, art, philosophy, and music as well (Heater, 2002). In the late 18th and 19th centuries, mass schooling became the favored strategy of European states for nation building and citizenship development (Ramirez & Boli, 1987). What citizenship education precisely entailed depended on the different states' ideologies (Heater, 2002). Democratic citizenship education developed as a result of Enlightenment ideals, while totalitarian states, such as Nazi Germany, used education to indoctrinate the young into the regime's ideology. Democratic citizenship education meant that education promoted, for instance, knowledge about institutions, civic morality, and patriotism. When and how citizenship education developed in democratic countries depends on varying factors such as immigration, religion and secularism, voting rights, military conflict, multiculturalism, globalization, and the formation of supranational institutions such as the European Union.

Citizenship Education in the Netherlands

Dutch citizenship education was influenced by a wide array of political and pedagogical thinkers such as Johan Rudolph Thorbecke, Philip Kohnstamm, Martinus Langeveld, and, more recently, Micha De Winter, as well as by the prevailing political climate and disrupting events such as the attacks of September 11, 2001, and the murder of the Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn (De Jong, 2021; Doppen, 2010). Different religious opinions and different ideas about the role of religion in education led to the so-called School Struggle (*schoolstrijd*), which was finally settled with Article 23, often referred to as Freedom of Education (Rietveld-van Wingerden et al., 2003). Through this article, the constitution stipulates that the government decides on core educational objectives and supervises educational quality, but schools themselves are free to choose their educational methods and adapt the curriculum how they see fit. Because of Freedom of Education, the Netherlands now has great diversity in publicly funded schools with regards to religious orientation (e.g., Protestant, Catholic, and Islamic) and has publicly funded schools with a range of pedagogical orientations (e.g., Montessori, Dalton).

All schools can develop their own methods for and outlook on citizenship education as long as they adhere to the core educational objectives determined by the Dutch government. Citizenship education became obligatory in all types of secondary education in 1968, when social studies (*maatschappijleer*) became part of the curriculum (De Jong, 2021). This subject was meant to provide an introduction to modern society, but its objectives and who should teach it were left unclear and became a subject of debate. More recently, since the 1990s, social cohesion, individualization, multiculturalization, and national identity have become major themes in the discussion about the importance of citizenship education. To promote active citizenship and social integration, a law on citizenship education (*burgerschapsonderwijs*) was passed in 2006 (De Groot et al., 2022). Moreover, to support the development of a shared national identity, the Dutch historical canon became a required part of primary and secondary school curriculum in 2009 (Doppen, 2010).

Citizenship competences of Dutch students, measured in the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study of 2016, lagged behind those of students in comparable countries (Dijkstra et al., 2021). In addition, societal concerns grew about extremism, polarization, and the weakening of the democratic constitutional state (Eidhof, 2018). The debate about citizenship education was fueled by incidents that showed friction between the state's conception of good citizenship and Article 23's Freedom of Education stipulations (De Groot et al., 2022).

To clarify the schools' citizenship task and to better equip the Inspectorate of Education to intervene, the Dutch Citizenship Education Act was passed in 2021 (De Groot et al., 2022). In line with the 2006 Citizenship Education Act, it obliges schools to promote active citizenship and social cohesion. The amended act of 2021 further required that citizenship education must focus on respect for and knowledge of the basic values of the democratic state, on the development of social and societal competencies, and on knowledge and respect for differences and equal treatment of all citizens. In addition, the 2021 act mandated that schools must ensure a culture in line with basic democratic values so that students can practice these values in an environment where students and staff feel safe and accepted. Although the new law provides some direction for education, schools themselves must formulate citizenship objectives, determine their educational methods, and assess their students' development (Inspectorate of Education, 2022) beginning with formulating their views on citizenship education.

Contemporary Views on Citizenship Education

There appears to be no consensus on the precise meaning of citizenship education. One way of thinking about citizenship education—attributable to Dewey (van der Ploeg, 2019)—is to view the whole of education as civic education (Van der Ploeg & Guérin, 2016). From this viewpoint, the school is responsible for general education. Developing elementary competences such as critical thinking and judgment skills, along with offering a wide and in-depth curriculum, all add up to the requirements of good citizenship. However, a more particular conception of citizenship seems to underpin mainstream citizenship education policy and research (Guérin, 2018; Guérin et al., 2013; Joris, 2022). Guérin coined the term *participatory approach* for this conception of citizenship education. This approach is based on an idea of good citizenship characterized by political literacy, critical thinking skills, certain values, attitudes, behaviors (such as freedom, equality, respect, tolerance, and solidarity), and active participation. Hence, citizenship education can entail, for example, children being encouraged to visit lonely elderly people, to pick up litter from the streets, to vote, to volunteer, and to respect and be tolerant of differences. According to Van der Ploeg (2020), this participatory approach to citizenship education is consistent with the prevailing culture of neoliberalism, which assumes that everyone must take care of themselves and stand up for themselves, and that societal problems can be solved by improving individuals' behavior and lifestyle.

Although mainstream research and policy are based on the participatory idea and thus suggest consensus on the associated goals (Eidhof et al., 2016), other researchers argue that there is in fact no consensus about the objectives of citizenship education and that differing views on democracy and good citizenship exist (e.g., Guérin, 2018; Sant, 2019). Ideas about democracy and good citizenship can emphasize community, togetherness, and a focus on behaving productively and appropriately (i.e., communitarian perspective). However, the emphasis can also be on autonomy, individual rights, and liberty (i.e., liberal perspective). Yet another, more critical approach to citizenship emphasizes social justice, where a good citizen views society critically and acts accordingly (i.e., critical-emancipatory perspective). While these three approaches to good citizenship seem distinct, intermediate forms and slight variations are, of course, possible (e.g., Eidhof et al., 2016; Geboers et al., 2015; Guérin, 2018; Leenders & Veugelers, 2009; Sant, 2019; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). In addition to these three approaches, other ideas about citizenship are less known. For example, there are more agonistic perspectives, in which conflict is seen as valuable (Parra et al., 2021; Sant, 2019; Van der Ploeg & Guérin, 2016; Van Waveren, 2020). Additionally, non-participatory perspectives exist, which do not consider it necessary at all for everyone to be politically involved in order for a democracy to function (Van der Ploeg & Guérin, 2016).

Because of the range of views on democracy and good citizenship, schools must clearly justify why they choose a certain perspective (Guérin, 2018). To clarify what citizenship education can mean, we have contrasted the different views on citizenship education by posing the following fundamental questions:

1. What is the "why" of citizenship education?
2. Who is responsible for citizenship education?

3. What is the ideal citizen?
4. Should citizenship education prescribe specific values and behaviors?
5. What is emphasized in citizenship education?
6. What is the context of citizenship education?

The appendix presents examples of possible contradictions for each fundamental question on citizenship education. These contradictions provide the framework for our analysis of Montessori's writings. Although we contrasted views, intermediate views are often possible. For developing the framework of views on citizenship education, we referred to literature about views on good citizenship and citizenship education (e.g., Guérin, 2018; Jeliazkova, 2015; Van der Ploeg, 2020; Veugelers, 2011), the goals of citizenship education (e.g., Eidhof, 2020; Hodson, 2020; Van der Ploeg & Guérin, 2016), citizenship and democracy (Biesta, 2021), and about the contexts for citizenship education (Biesta et al., 2009). The complete framework of views on citizenship education, as used for our analysis, can be found in the appendix.

A Closer Look at Montessori's Life to Provide a Deeper Context for Her Views

In this study we synthesize Montessori's writings that deal with citizenship education to express her view on citizenship and citizenship education. Events in Montessori's life and the period in which she grew up shaped the way in which she interpreted the concept of citizenship in her pedagogy. Montessori advocated for human rights and the emancipation of women well before her career as an educator (Moretti, 2021). Montessori was a delegate to the International Congress of Women in Berlin in 1896 where she not only represented Italy but also spoke on equal rights to work and equal wages for men and women. After graduating from medical school in 1896, Montessori worked as a volunteer at the psychiatric clinic in Rome where she encountered children with intellectual disability. During this period, she realized that working with these children was more of a pedagogical issue rather than a medical one, and she became convinced of the need for special schools (Kramer, 1976). Over time, Montessori began to explore educational and pedagogical approaches to serve these children.

In the early 1900s, entirely new neighborhoods were built around Rome to improve the lives of future citizens. These plans addressed the root causes of deprivation and inequality by educating young children through societal awareness and emancipation (Moretti, 2021). In 1907, Montessori applied what she had learned in her work with intellectually disabled children in Rome's low-income neighborhoods where she established the first Casa dei Bambini, which would later prove to be the starting point of the worldwide dissemination of the Montessori Method (Kramer, 1976).

Montessori Education in Italy

As Montessori schools started to flourish in other countries in the early 1920s, Montessori was introduced to Mussolini, the then prime minister of Italy, in 1923. Mussolini announced that he wanted to transform Italian schools according to the Montessori Method—a policy decision Montessori was eager to embrace, given the small number of Montessori schools in Italy at the time (de Stefano, 2020; Kramer, 1976). A national Montessori training program, under state patronage, was established in 1926, but the transformation of Italian schools into Montessori schools proved difficult. According to Kramer (1976), Montessori insisted that she was "apolitical and that 'the cause of the child' superseded ephemeral distinctions of party and nation" (p. 281). While this basic incompatibility meant that cooperation with Mussolini's fascist regime was convoluted from the very start, her relationship with Mussolini remained cordial, and Montessori even made some concessions to adapt her method to the fascist ideology—although it remains unclear what adjustments, if any, were implemented (de Stefano, 2020; Leenders, 1999). However, as government interference in the Italian Montessori Society and the organization of Montessori teacher training kept increasing, a rupture became inevitable (Moretti, 2021; Quarfood, 2023). After ten years of collaboration with the regime, Montessori dramatically withdrew in 1933, leading to the closure of all Montessori schools in Italy in 1936 (de Stefano, 2020; Quarfood, 2023).

Emerging Perspective on Peace

Gradually, starting around 1932, Montessori increasingly spoke of peace education and of one world for all humanity, a precursor to her ideas of world citizenship. Montessori started to place an increased emphasis on children's rights. She no longer focused solely on changing the adult in the school, but also on changing society and therefore the world through education (de Stefano, 2020). To strengthen this view, Montessori announced the Social Party of the Child at the International Montessori Congress in Copenhagen in 1937, which was a party that championed the rights of the child and ex-

amined contemporary sociopolitical problems from the child's perspective (Montessori, 2019a; Moretti, 2021). During World War II, when Montessori was in India for a prolonged period, she further developed the concept of cosmic education, which essentially embodies the responsibility for building peace and developing moral values (Raimondo, 2023). After spending the World War II years in India, Montessori returned to Europe in 1946. In 1951, a year before her death, she spoke at UNESCO about the importance of early childhood education to improve society and the world.

When examining the concept of citizenship in Montessori education, we cannot avoid considering the historical context of Montessori's life. Her statements about citizenship are deeply rooted in and informed by the geopolitical times through which she lived. Keeping this in mind, we revisited Montessori's original works with a team of Dutch Montessori experts to analyze her conception of citizenship more closely. The main question of this study is: What did Montessori think about citizenship education?

Method

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of Montessori's view on citizenship based on a literature review conducted by a panel of Dutch Montessori experts.

Expert Panel

The panel of five Montessori experts conducting the review was selected by the Dutch Montessori Association. The panelists were Jaap de Brouwer, Anastasia Dingarten, Esther Pelgrom, Mirjam Stefels, and Annemarie Looijenga. Each panelist has more than fifteen years of experience as a Montessori teacher, teacher educator, administrator, and/or researcher. De Brouwer, leader of the expert panel, is a Montessori researcher and Montessori teacher educator with classroom experience as a Montessori teacher. Dingarten has a background in philosophy and is also a Montessori teacher educator. Both Pelgrom and Stefels have backgrounds as Montessori teachers and are now experienced Montessori teacher educators. Looijenga was also a Montessori teacher and now holds a doctorate in educational research, having conducted her research in Montessori schools.

Procedure

Using the framework of views on citizenship education (see the appendix), the panel started discussing these views within Montessori philosophy in three two-hour sessions. For example, the panelists discussed whether Montessori's view on citizenship education is focused on cohesion within the child's community or on cohesion within society as a whole, and if Montessori's view on citizenship education is mainly focused on attitudes and behaviors or mainly on knowledge. Discussing these different views on citizenship education provided an initial shared idea of Montessori's stance on citizenship education within the expert panel. As citizenship education or related contemporary terminology was not part of Montessori's vocabulary, the panelists formulated sensitizing concepts, which they identified as closely related to Montessori's view on citizenship education based on the aforementioned discussions. Sensitizing concepts give ideas of directions to pursue and sensitize researchers to particular aspects of a topic (Boeije, 2010). These concepts were: cosmic education, moral development, citizenship, peace, society, social development, responsibility, freedom, and independence. These concepts were used to identify relevant Montessori literature. Using Montessori's own terminology not only guided the panel to select relevant books but also relevant quotations within these books. For example, the term cosmic education led us to include Montessori's book *To Educate the Human Potential* in the literature review while excluding *Psychoarithmetic* because it mentions none of the identified concepts.
The literature search of Montessori's works began with six books selected based on consensus within the panel regarding their relevance (see Table 1). Each book was read fully and reviewed by one of the panelists, and the retrieved citations were discussed in the panel. Based on these discussions, panelists identified and read another eight books (see Table 1), resulting in a saturation of new relevant citations .

The panel reviewed 14 of Montessori's books in total (see Table 1). As the example in Table 2 demonstrates, each panelist subdivided and systematically ordered their retrieved citations by the views on citizenship education as outlined in the framework in the appendix. This resulted in 494 citations of Montessori's view on citizenship education found in her books, subdivided and systematically ordered using the same framework (see the appendix). Some citations fit in multiple views of citizenship education. Table 2 demonstrates only a subset of Montessori's citations that fit this view of citizenship education as an example of the analysis we employed. De Brouwer wrote a synthesis from the combined categorized Montessori literature citations. The synthesis was completed with the help of two rounds of discussion with the panel. Panel members reviewed and provided written feedback

Table 1

General Description of the Methodology

Phase 1	The panel discussed views on citizenship education resulting in an initial shared idea of Montessori's views on citizenship education.
Phase 2	The panel formulated sensitizing concepts to identify relevant Montessori literature: cosmic education, moral development, citizenship, peace, society, social development, responsibility, freedom, and independence.
Phase 3	First round of reading and reviewing by the panel members. All retrieved citations were discussed in the panel. Citizen of the World (2019) Education and Peace (1949/1992) Door het Kind Naar een Nieuwe Wereld [Through the child into a new world] (1941/1952) The Formation of Man (1949/1954) The Child, Society and the World (1979/2016) To Educate the Human Potential (1947/1998)
Phase 4	Second round of reading and reviewing by the panel members based on previous expert-panel discussion. All retrieved citations were discussed in the panel. The Advanced Montessori Method (1917/2022) Education for a New World (1946) From Childhood to Adolescence (1973) Creative Development in the Child (2020) The Montessori Method (1909/2016) The 1946 London Lectures (2012) The Secret of Childhood (2021) The Absorbent Mind (1949/2019)
Phase 5	The panel members systematically ordered their retrieved citations, using the framework of views on citizenship education.
Phase 6	De Brouwer wrote a synthesis from the categorized citations, completed with two rounds of discussion within the panel and one round of written feedback by the panel members.

Table 2

Example of Systematically Ordered Retrieved Citations, Using the Framework of Views on Citizenship Education

View on citizenship education	Society (government, school, parents) may decide what kind of citizen children should be. / Children themselves may decide what kind of citizen they want to be.
Montessori citations	"One of the tasks of the child is to build himself adapted to the environment. (…) Adaptation is the starting point, the ground we stand on" (Montessori, 2019a, p. 11). "The adult defeats the child; and once the child reaches adulthood the characteristic signs of the peace that is only an aftermath of war—destruction on one hand and painful adjustment on the other—remain with him for the rest of his life. The age-old, superficial notion that the development of the individual is uniform and progressive remains unchanged and the mistaken idea that the adult must mold the child in the pattern that society wishes still holds sway. (…) The child is not simply a miniature adult. He is first and foremost the possessor of a life of his own that has certain special characteristics and that has its own goal" (Montessori, 1949/1992, p. 15). "The only true freedom for an individual is to have the opportunity to act independently" (Montessori, 1949/1992, p. 55).

on the final synthesis, but the member check did not lead to content-related revisions.

Results

From her experiences and perspective, weighing the consequences of the geopolitical context of Europe in the first decades of the 20th century, Montessori was convinced that the improvement of society should begin with educational reform. Montessori (1941/1952) reasoned that if the children do well, the world will eventually do well. She spoke of the "new man," a generation of children capable of building a new form of community, a new society in which strong, independent personalities live together peacefully and freely (Montessori, 1941/1952; 1949/1992, p. 21). Montessori education is therefore primarily aimed at fostering the progress of society. Montessori was confident that children could achieve this goal if they were properly prepared for it. Children, according to Montessori (1941/1952, 1949/1992), should not be raised in the image of the adult. Instead, education should enable children to shape their own futures because "the child plays a fundamental role in determining the future of humanity" (Montessori, 1941/1952, p. 35). This future requires an education that enables children to develop into independent, balanced people that can make contributions to society (Montessori, 1941/1952).

Based on our analysis, we have identified seven themes that characterize Montessori's view on citizenship education: (1) one common citizenship goal; (2) preparation for independent thinking and action; (3) image of the future citizen; (4) adapted and critical citizens; (5) humanity for harmony; (6) knowledge as prerequisite, personality development as goal; and (7) an ever-expanding worldview. Each of these themes are discussed in the sections that follow.

One Common Citizenship Goal

Citizenship, or the pursuit of a better society, is a responsibility for all adults (Montessori, 2019a). Montessori (2019a) stated that human beings do not form a society if they only pursue their own personal goals. The ultimate form of human society is based on organization, cohesion, and having common objectives. The common goals that Montessori talked about include allowing the child's personality to mature, which can then contribute to the advancement of a civilized, cohesive, and peaceful human society (Montessori, 1949/1992, 1946). Home and school should work together to achieve this common goal (Montessori, 1941/1952).

According to Montessori (1947/1998, 1979/2016), many changes for the benefit of the child were required to achieve this common citizenship objective, including parenting techniques, teaching methods, and the school system itself. While early in the 20th century the general conditions for adults improved, Montessori (1949/1992) noted that conditions for children had worsened. The key to improving conditions for the child was in the hands of the adults who should be less proud, less selfish, and less authoritarian (Montessori, 1979/2016). Montessori revolted against the old patterns in which teachers imposed their own values and beliefs onto the children (1947/1998). She argued that teachers had to give the children space to form their own opinions and judgments (1947/1998).

Montessori believed the same philosophy held true for the traditional educational system at large because it was not developing the child's personality (Montessori, 1979/2016). The environment did not allow children to be active and, therefore, they were not allowed any influence. Moreover, while the school curriculum should be an aid to education, it should not be imposed on humanity in the name of an ideology or out of a social or political belief (Montessori 1941/1952, 1949/1992, 1979/2016). Montessori (1946, 1949/1992) indicated that education should no longer consist of imparting knowledge but should instead follow a new path, a path that explicitly strives to unfold human potential and the development of personality. Urging a changing role for parents, teachers, education, and adults in general is typical of Montessori's thinking about citizenship. Upbringing and education shapes new generations, empowers them, and thereby enables them to do things differently, if they decide to do so themselves.

Preparation for Independent Thinking and Action

Montessori (1949/1992) believed that children should decide for themselves about the kind of citizens they want to be but not necessarily figure it out all by themselves. Montessori (1947/1998) believed that children should be empowered so that they can make their own informed decisions. To make informed decisions, children should be initiated into society, study it, and try to understand and accommodate it (Montessori, 1941/1952, 1979/2016, 2019a). Teachers can give children the freedom to experience and absorb complex society in their individual ways by teaching them the norms, practices, behavior patterns, ideals, religions, and

other aspects of their society (Montessori, 1941/1952, 1979/2016). Practices and experiences thus form the basis for social and moral education in Montessori education (Montessori, 1941/1952). In Montessori's (1947/1998) view, education bears a specific responsibility to provide these experiences, although it is a shared responsibility of the school with parents or caregivers and community organizations. According to Montessori (1973, 1979/2016), home, school, and other organizations must work together as the child cannot develop without a social environment.

Image of the Future Citizen

Montessori (1949/1992) had a clear image of an ideal society in which citizens are interconnected and responsible for living together in harmony. Being part of a community entails rules of behavior and obligations that make it possible to live together in a peaceful manner (Montessori, 2019a). The ideal citizen seeks common goals, contributes to these goals, is an independent and balanced personality, and behaves responsibly to make a harmonious society possible. Although Montessori gave children the freedom and responsibility to decide for themselves what kind of citizens they want to become, she did have a clear conception of the future society—how education could contribute to it, and what kind of citizen was needed for that society. This represents a paradox in Montessori's thoughts about citizenship: while the adult should not impose moral judgments on children and children should be given the liberty to decide for themselves what kind of citizen they wanted to become, Montessori did have clear images of what the future society might look like and what kind of citizens would be required.

Adapted and Critical Citizens

The ideal citizen as seen by Montessori is both socially adaptable and critical. Montessori (1941/1952, 1949/1992, 1949/2019b) emphasized the importance of social cohesion not based on personal desires but on social integration, where individuals identified with the group to which they belonged (Montessori, 1949/2019b). The human harmony of which Montessori wrote requires adaptability of the individual. According to Montessori (2019a), becoming a well-adapted citizen is a crucial starting point for children's development into independent, balanced human beings who can fulfill their adult roles in future society. Kindness toward others, love, peace, brotherhood, respecting other people, offering help when needed, and dignity—these objectives cannot be reached by merely teaching them, but rather by having children experience and practice them from an early age, over a long period of time (Montessori, 1941/1952).

A child that has adapted to culture and society can subsequently begin to have independent thoughts about the individual's role in relation to society, hence becoming a critical citizen. Montessori called for independent thinking and giving children freedom to express themselves and shape the world for themselves (Montessori, 1941/1952, 1947/1998). She believed those who want to work for a better society should not be guided by political ideals or religion but rather be in the service of the whole of humanity itself (Montessori, 1949/1954, 1947/1998). Montessori's ideal citizen therefore deeply understands society, its values, and virtues, and uses this knowledge to think and act in freedom and with a sense of responsibility toward society as a whole and the unique individuals within it.

Humanity for Harmony

Montessori (1941/1952, 1949/1992, 1979/2016, 1949/2019b) advocated solidarity, harmony, and peace, but noted that society does not adequately prepare people for a life as citizens. There is, according to Montessori (1949/1992), no "moral organization" of the masses (p. xi). People are raised to see themselves as isolated individuals who must satisfy their immediate needs by competing with other individuals. Montessori (1979/2016) argued that humanity is unaware of the need for unification. She saw people fighting for themselves, their families, and their nation, yet being unaware of their responsibility of working together (Montessori, 1947/1998). Montessori saw it as her task to make children aware of the need for unity because the mission of education is to cultivate peace and peacefulness in children (Montessori, 1946, 1947/1998, 1949/1992). It would take a powerful educational effort, according to Montessori (1949/1992), to enable people to understand and structure social phenomena, to propose and pursue collective goals over individual ones, and thus to achieve ordered social progress.

Knowledge as Prerequisite, Personality Development as Goal

In her call for a civilized, peaceful, and harmonious society, Montessori seems to have been more focused on the social aspect of citizenship education than the political. She was politically active on a personal level with, for example, her commitment to women's rights

and the promotion of children's rights, but she did not envision a role for politics in education. As a result, it remains unclear how and to what extent politics should be part of the curriculum. Montessori (1949/1992) did express her opinion that politics should prevent conflicts and schools could contribute to this political mission by cultivating peace and peaceful problem solving. While laws can protect the rights of children to support them growing up to be responsible, peaceful citizens, Montessori (1979/2016, 2019a) argued that laws by themselves will never suffice to lead to harmonious coexistence. She doubted whether children's rights or civil rights alone could guarantee the protection and support truly necessary for a harmonious, peaceful society (Montessori, 1979/2016).

Montessori (1949/1992, 2019a) also advocated for teaching virtues and values related to world peace and harmonious coexistence. Education can provide children with the knowledge and practice to deal well with diverse groups and cultures as adults. Knowledge, in its broadest sense, helps children develop their personality and morality (Montessori, 1941/1952, 1917/2022). Morality, knowing the difference between right and wrong, is something that Montessori (1917/2022) considered to be teachable and refined through practice and experience. According to Montessori (1949/1992), the personality of the child must be developed in such a way that it can contribute to the construction of a new society. To this end, the child should acquire knowledge and social experiences simultaneously (Montessori, 1941/1952, 1973).

An Ever-Expanding Worldview

Montessori described the child's personality development in an ever-expanding prepared environment. Such a prepared environment aims to make the adult world accessible to the child, whatever the child's stage of development. In Montessori's view, children as young as six can have constructive contributions to their environment (1941/1952), older children care for the environment and do productive work in it (1941/1952, 1949/1992), and children from the age of 12 should actively participate in society beyond school. She advocated that adolescents produce, sell, work, and experience working life by interacting with others, learning the value of money, and being part of their community (1949/1992). Through social experience and practical knowledge from the immediate environment, the child develops into a responsible citizen (1941/1952). At some point, she argued, the protected, prepared school environment no longer suffices because the older child needs an expanded environment to engage with society and further develop their moral consciousness (Montessori, 1973, 1949/1992, 1917/2022). Montessori (1949/1992) spoke of human cooperation in the global community with all people having responsibility for each other. Thus, she saw the older child's environment as the entire world, with the overarching goal of developing children into global citizens.

Conclusion

Our analysis demonstrates that Montessori was convinced a better world is possible through education. If we nurture future generations with knowledge and skills through citizenship education, they will develop well-balanced personalities with a sense of responsibility. Citizenship education can expand children's experiences and thinking, opening up new worlds and preparing them for adult responsibilities by enabling them to participate competently, morally, and reliably in society. This participation goes hand in hand with being critical and reflecting on society. Reflection enables one to consider the present in light of the common goal of humanity: living together in harmonious, peaceful ways.

To make explicit how Montessori's vision of citizenship can be expressed in education, we have drawn up design principles that can give direction to shaping citizenship education in Montessori schools. These six design principles are grounded in Montessori's view on citizenship education and address the six fundamental questions of citizenship education (see appendix). The design principles are stated in the form of if-then reasonings because multiple views on citizenship education are possible. If one thinks about citizenship education in a certain way, then this has consequences for one's educational practices. With this formulation, we encourage teachers to reflect on their own views on citizenship education and their educational practices in relation to Montessori's views. See Table 3 for the six design principles.

Discussion

Although Montessori had a very comprehensive view of citizenship education, as our results demonstrated, we must recognize that there are some gaps: aspects of citizenship education that she did not address in her work. For example, we found little in Montessori's literature about whether a Montessori school should propagate one specific perspective on good citizenship or present a vari-

Table 3

Six Design Principles to Develop Montessori Citizenship Education

What is the "why" of citizenship education?	
If you want to make the world a better place through education…	…then you will equip children with knowledge, skills, and a sense of responsibility so that they can make the changes in society that they believe are necessary and you will enable them to actively work towards a world that is peaceful and harmonious.
Who is responsible for citizenship education?	
If you believe that citizenship is a joint responsibility of all adults and that children are allowed to decide for themselves what kind of citizens they want to be…	…then you jointly represent society for the child and provide children with enough experiences so that they can form their own personalities and moralities (emancipation). You give children the space to form their own way of thinking and do not impose your own views—or way of life—upon them.
What is the ideal citizen?	
If you believe that children should adapt to today's society in order to form their own critical opinions about it…	…then you stimulate respect for other people, and cultures, and dignity—without forcing children to behave in a compliant manner. You also encourage independent thinking, a love of knowledge and work ethic, and you give them the freedom to express themselves and to take initiative.
Should citizenship education prescribe specific values and behaviors?	
If you think that children ultimately have the responsibility for peaceful and harmonious coexistence and you want to cultivate this without molding the children to your own moral image…	...then you stimulate knowledge in the broadest sense of the word and provide an environment in which children learn to think and act for themselves and develop a balanced personality, which can lead to a peaceful and harmonious world.
What is emphasized in citizenship education?	
If you believe that the emphasis in citizenship education should be on knowledge, skills, and a sense of responsibility…	…then you assume that positive attitudes are a result of acquiring knowledge and skills and an awareness of the responsibility for realizing a peaceful and harmonious society. Attention to rights is important, but it is more necessary that children understand what they themselves can do to improve society.
What is the context of citizenship education?	
If you want to develop children into citizens of the world…	…then children must gain the social experiences that allow them to understand the importance of respect for and connections with other people and cultures. They must learn to understand the world and to set and pursue collective goals that enable them to make a real and fundamental contribution to the world.

ety of perspectives. Furthermore, although it is tempting to adopt Montessori's thinking on citizenship education and align educational practice with it, we must recognize that Montessori's ideas arose in a particular time and context with specific characteristics and challenges. If she had lived today, perhaps her ideas would have been different. She could not have determined once and for all and for everyone what citizenship is. Just as the interpretation of Montessori's works must take into account the time in which she lived, the interpretation of contemporary citizenship education must take into account modern society. The society in which Montessori developed her philosophy and method has given way for a neoliberal, growth-oriented, individualistic society, which tends to isolate people and undermine the harmony and solidarity that is at the heart of Montessori's thinking (Han, 2022). The challenges for implementing Montessori's vision of citizenship education were quite different from those faced by educators today.

Neoliberal society focuses on individual success and the adapted citizen. The ideal citizen, according to this narrative, is someone who conforms to the existing societal structures, contributes to them, strives towards individual success, and does not question social conditions. What is missing in this dominant narrative, from a Montessorian point of view, is the

critical citizen—the citizen who is capable of questioning societal structures and conditions in light of the ideal of a harmonious, peaceful society. The citizen who can help change the world and shape the new society is the one who is able to deal with complex future challenges and complicated problems. The knotty question for Montessori education today is: What, in the face of these challenges, does this require of our educational practice? This is not an easy question to answer because it requires a deep and ongoing dialogue about Montessorian citizenship education. This study can provide a framework for this continued discussion.

Limitations

These conclusions are based on a review of Montessori's work. However, methodologically, our study has had several limitations. First, although we believe that the experts who contributed to the review of Montessori's work are well qualified and have done excellent work, convenience played a role in their selection and the judgement of their expertise was subjective. Second, we decided to start with a framework of views on citizenship education, which may have narrowed the panel's view on the breadth of what citizenship education may entail. Another approach could have been to study the works of Montessori inductively, without establishing a prior framework of views on citizenship education. However, the panel approach we employed required a framework to facilitate a common discourse. Third, for practical reasons, we divided the selected works of Montessori among the experts so that each work was only studied by one expert. Our analysis would be more thorough and our results more reliable if each work had been studied by multiple experts. Fourth, we could have studied Montessori's writings using digital methods and coding; however, we saw value in leveraging the expertise and experience of the panel. Although we acknowledge these limitations, the insights from this study can provide a foundation for designing and teaching citizenship education through a Montessorian lens.

Directions for Future Research

Although we now have a better understanding of Montessori's vision of citizenship education, this study leads to further research questions.

Understanding Practice

Examining citizenship education as implemented in Montessori schools may clarify to what extent theory and practice align. Furthermore, it is worth exploring whether the views of Montessori teachers match the Montessorian view on citizenship education that we found. A questionnaire with different views on citizenship education could be a means to explore this question and could provide insights into differences between countries. Comparative studies could uncover to what extent Montessori's views of citizenship are universal or are influenced by social, cultural, legal, historical, and economical national contexts.

International Input

Since our panel consisted only of Dutch experts, familiar with the Dutch context in the field of citizenship and Montessori education, future research could examine whether an international panel (including, for instance, Italian speakers) would find similar results as our Dutch panel.

Comparing Views

This study can serve as a useful foundation for comparing Montessori's views on citizenship education not only with other reform pedagogies from Montessori's own time, such as Dalton, Jenaplan, or Waldorf schools, but also with contemporary thinkers on pedagogy and education.

Citizenship is a multifaceted concept, encompassing multiple dimensions within which different conceptualizations are possible. Therefore, it is crucial that Montessori schools understand the origins of Montessori education and Maria Montessori's thoughts on citizenship education. The Dutch Citizenship Education Act gives direction to the interpretation of citizenship education but leaves schools in the Netherlands much room to shape it in their own way. The insights our study gives into the views of Montessori on citizenship education can help schools shape their citizenship education and make their thoughts explicit.

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Appendix

Framework of Views on Citizenship Education

Question	View A	View B
What is the "why" of citizenship education?	Citizenship education is important because society needs citizens with certain competencies. For instance, to deal with social issues (extremism, threats to democracy, climate change…).	Citizenship education is important because children need to get acquainted with how our society works, and children need the possibility to shape society as they wish.
	Citizenship education is important, because it can bring about social change or protect and maintain the existing social and political situation.	Citizenship education is important, so children themselves can give a destination to their own life.
	School is the place for citizenship education; it is a small society where children can practice citizenship.	School is the place for citizenship education; this is where children can study diverse social forms and types of citizenship.
	Citizenship education should bring children in contact with the complex reality.	Children should be able to have an unconcerned childhood.
Who is responsible for citizenship education?	The goals set by the school should mainly be decisive for citizenship education.	The goals set by the government should mainly be decisive for citizenship education.
	Parents/caregivers are a potential risk for democratic education.	Parents/caregivers should determine the direction of education.
	The school is primarily responsible for achieving the goals of citizenship education.	The goals of citizenship education are a joint social responsibility (of sport clubs, cultural organizations, parents, school, etc.).
	Society (government, school, parents) may decide what kind of citizen children should be.	Children themselves may decide what kind of citizen they want to be.
What is the ideal citizen?	The focus of citizenship education should mainly be on treating each other well, taking each other into account, and dealing with differences and diversity.	The focus of citizenship education should mainly be on engagement with politics and political issues.
	Citizenship education should mainly stimulate certain emotions, attitudes, and behaviors (for instance, empathy and solidarity) in children.	Citizenship education should mainly stimulate that children themselves critically think about what good emotions, attitudes, and behaviors are.
	The focus of citizenship education should mainly be on loyalty, togetherness, unity, community spirit, and sense of nationality.	The focus of citizenship education should mainly be on judging independently and critically, and civil disobedience if necessary.

Should citizenship education prescribe specific values and behaviors?	The school should propagate one specific perspective on good citizenship.	The school should present a variety of perspectives on good citizenship.
	Children should learn that a good citizen participates socially and politically. Citizenship education should, for instance, stimulate active membership of associations and organizations, voting, and civic engagement.	Children may determine themselves if they wish to be socially and politically active. You are also a good citizen when you do not participate. Individual freedom of choice is important herein.
	Children should adapt to society.	Children should learn to shape society themselves.
	Teachers should help children to change their opinion if it goes against prevailing norms, values, and views.	Teachers should not be allowed to change the opinion of children. A child may have an opinion that goes against prevailing norms, values, and views.
	Teachers should share their political and ideological preferences.	Teachers should stay neutral about their political and ideological preferences.
What is emphasized in citizenship education?	The focus of citizenship education should mainly be on attitudes and behaviors.	The focus of citizenship education should mainly be on knowledge.
	Children should learn that anger, conflict, resistance, and fight can be worthwhile as form of activism, engagement, and solidarity.	Children should mainly learn forms of peaceful decision-making.
	In citizenship education, there should mainly be attention to individual and collective rights (Rights of the Child, human rights, fundamental rights).	In citizenship education, there should mainly be attention to duties and responsibilities (obeying the law, paying taxes, working and learning, caring for each other).
	The focus of citizenship education should mainly be on learning to think about and make decisions about social problems.	The focus of citizenship education should mainly be on learning to take action towards resolving social problems.
What is the context of citizenship education?	Citizenship education should be directed to cohesion within the child's community (for instance, religion/origin/group).	Citizenship education should be directed to cohesion within society as a whole.
	It is mainly important that children are committed to the interests of their community (for instance, religion/origin/group).	It is mainly important that children are committed to the common good.
	The focus should mainly be on citizenship within the local and national context.	The focus should mainly be on citizenship within the European and worldwide context.
	At school, social issues should mainly be approached from a local or national perspective.	At school, social issues should be approached from a worldwide perspective.
	Citizenship education should be about issues within the child's world of experiences.	Citizenship education should be about issues outside the child's world of experiences.
	Citizenship education should only be about issues that the child has direct influence on.	Citizenship education should also be about issues that the child has no or only indirect influence on.